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SUBJECT: ZUMA CONTINUES HARD PRESS FOR AFRIKANER SUPPORT

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Summary

¶1. (SBU) One of the more interesting trends to emerge during this election season is the intense focus by Jacob Zuma and the African National Congress (ANC) in lobbying the Afrikaner vote ahead of the election. Many pundits and political analysts have speculated that the Afrikaner vote would go to a mix of the Congress of the People (COPE), Democratic Alliance (DA), or the Freedom Front Plus (FF). These prognostications, however, have not stopped the ANC from trying to win Afrikaner support. Zuma last week spoke to two separate Afrikaner business forums, ANC Youth League President Julius Malema visited the Afrikaner community of Orania, and there is speculation that the ANC may be close to forming a post-election alliance with the FF. End Summary.

Zuma Seeks Afrikaner Vote

¶2. (SBU) Zuma during the week of March 23 spoke at two gatherings in Pretoria: one with the Afrikaner trade union organization, Solidarity, and another with the Afriforum. During the meeting with Afriforum -- an organization including the Afrikaans Language and Culture Movement, the Afrikanerbond, AgriSA, the Dutch Reformed Church, Rapportryers, and the Voortrekkers -- Zuma spoke about ways in which the ANC can do better in addressing crime, health, and education. On April 1, Zuma spoke to a second Afriforum meeting in Johannesburg. Zuma noted at the meeting that "of all the white groups that are in South Africa, it is only the Afrikaners that are truly South Africans in the true sense of the word." (Note: The DA issued a statement noting how offensive such a remark is to South Africans of British heritage. Zuma's statement also tempts the reaction to many other European colonials, such as the Poles and other Eastern Europeans and the Italians and other Southern Europeans who have had a presence in South Africa since the nineteenth century. End Note.) ANC Treasurer, and one of the most prominent Afrikaans-speaking ANC leaders, Matthews Phosa publicly implored Afrikaners not to leave the country. He spoke to the gathering of the Afrikaner community at Zuma's request and said, "South Africa needs you." Phosa also called on Afrikaners present at the meeting "to give those who left (the country) good reason to come back." The ANC admitted making mistakes in governing, but pledged to do better.

13. (SBU) Zuma's remarks to Afrikaner interest groups comes at the same time that ANC Youth League President Julius Malema made a visit to the Afrikaner enclave of Orania in Northern Cape. Orania leaders invited Malema to visit the enclave because they believe the ANC will be sympathetic to their push for an independent homeland. Orania Beweging Carel Boshoff told reporters this week that he visited Zuma at his Johannesburg home in January and had a "very constructive meeting." Zuma reportedly told the FF that he wanted to visit Orania before the election. Malema described the meeting as very helpful and urged Afrikaners to continue playing a vital role in South Africa.

14. (SBU) University of South Africa professor Dirk Kotze on March 27 told Poloff that the ANC is pushing for Afrikaner votes because it wants to form an alliance with the FF after the national election on April 22. Kotze, who is extremely close to FF President Pieter Mulder, said the largely Afrikaner party wants to form an alliance with the ANC. He said that Mulder would join the ruling party in a coalition "right now if he thought he could get away with it." According to Kotze, Mulder is worried that if he forms a partnership with the ANC now, FF will lose votes to the DA. Kotze said, "Mulder is very aware of what could happen to his party." Kotze also noted that the ANC has as much of a chance of winning Afrikaner support as does COPE or the DA.

Comment

15. (SBU) The ANC's actions and Zuma's statements mark what for the ruling party is a brilliant tactic ahead of the election this month. If the ANC's two-thirds majority in

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Parliament is in peril, forming a strategic alliance with the FF would help push the ruling party higher in terms of representation -- especially at the provincial level. Critics of this potential alliance suggest that there may something cynical and sinister to this strange marriage of bedfellows, but others recall that not long ago the former apartheid National Party (the NATs) joined the ANC, pushing their majority to over 70 percent, and continue to the present working with them in Parliament. The FF earned less than .7 percent of the vote in 2004 (4 seats), but could help the ANC if other parties form coalitions or take seats in the legislature away from the ruling party. While there are few signs of Afrikaners voting for the ANC or strongly supporting the party, there also are few signs that this segment of the South African population is prepared to vote for anyone other than the FF .
LA LIME